

August Vlog 2018

Dr. Deborah Bergeron: Happy August, Head Start community. Welcome to my very first vlog. This is the August Vlog 2018. Each month, I'll try to send you a vlog with some information in it, some shout outs, and just try to connect with you ongoing, in a more personal way -- try to address any concerns that we see throughout the school year.

To get started, I'm going to share with you something I love. And this month's love shout out goes to Yvonne Gueteras in Kansas City. She runs a Family Child Care-Early Head Start Partnership with Child Care in her home. And I got to visit it last month. And it was absolutely gorgeous. Her home has been adapted to be an absolute state-of-the-art child care facility. The care that goes on her home is wonderful to watch. She has a very long waiting list to get in. So, you know it's meeting the needs of her community. And her husband has pitched in to make sure their home is prepared for that kind of environment. The backyard is expansive, and beautiful, with lots of places for the kids to play. It was a pure joy to meet Yvonne and her mom, who work together, to provide really good care for these children.

So, way to go, Yvonne. Keep doing the hard work you're doing for your neighborhood. And this month's topic for my vlog is going to be related to the video I sent out in July on school readiness. So, I kind of latched on to this.

As a public school person, I think it was just something kind of natural. And since developing this whole idea of focusing on school readiness, I realized that school readiness isn't really the accurate phrase. I really need to call this receiving school readiness, meaning the receiving school where your children will go when they finish Head Start, that's what I'm interested in making sure they're prepared for as they leave you.

So, I'm going to give you today five tips on receiving school readiness that will hopefully help you get started. If you're -- if you haven't already in this area, enrich what you're already doing, and just take you to the next level.

So, Number 1: Identify your receiving schools. Now that might seem really obvious, but it is important to know where will your children will go. And for some of you it's just one elementary school down the street. And for some of you it might be a multitude of schools. And the reality is you've got to know each one of them in order to do this really well. Because each of your children will show up. And if they are not specifically prepared for that building, it's going to be problematic for them. So, identify those schools, or that school initially, and that's Step 1.

Step 2: Find out what they expect. And you're going to want to know what the system expects. You'll want to know what the principal, the specific administrator expects. Even the teachers who make up the kindergarten team are probably going to have very specific tone to their classrooms, and what they prioritize. Getting to know all of that will really help you in be better informed when it comes to creating your own programming, and making sure it meets those needs. You'll want to know. Is there a standard assessment they're going to have to take when they arrive or before? Are there expectations of behavior in that specific school or classroom that are stand out behavior expectations? And you want to make sure your children are prepared for that, and it doesn't catch them off guard. Are there special education or ESOL needs in that school that might match with some of the needs of your kids, or vice versa?

Those are things to kind of identify.

Number 3: Here's a fun suggestion for you, as you start to break the ice with your public school, if you haven't done so already. And that is, attend a school board meeting. School board meetings can be really insightful as to what the priorities of that school system are. And while you're there, you can meet the school board, meet the school board chair. Introduce yourself. They can get to know you. You can become part of that community. In fact, most school board meetings have public comment time. Sign up for public comment. And get up and introduce your Head Start program to the school board. Let them know you're there. Brag about something really neat you're doing. And invite them to come join you. Or something like that, where you're just starting to make that connection, and really imbed yourself in that community so that Head Start isn't over here, and the public school is over here. And to add to that, if you want to really be ambitious, bring your Policy Council with you to that school board meeting. Let your parents get up and talk about your Head Start program and be your advocate. Not only is that going to help you, but ultimately that parent will be more prepared to be involved in that school and school system once they arrive. So that's a way to kind of wean them into that process. And you're there to support them at that point. Once they get there, you're no longer part of the equation. So, it's nice to have that little bit of transition.

Do the same thing with the PTA. If there's a PTA meeting at the school, meet the PTA board members. Go to the PTA meeting. Go to one of their events, and get to know those people. Introduce your parents. And so, again, you're talking about a transitional relationship versus a hard cut from Head Start over to the public school.

And finally, identify something that your Head Start program has that could benefit that school. One that I think of off the top of my head is how well prepared health-wise Head Start children are for kindergarten. The medical records are there. The dental records are there. All of those things are taken care of. I remember as a principal, sometimes we'd be chasing around that paperwork. People would be making phone call, after phone call, and trying to make sure that the records are complete. And you're going to be able to bring those things to that elementary school packaged. Your parents will have that stuff ready to go. And so, when you're talking to a principal, that could be something that you offer as a benefit to the Head Start program. If you could think of other things that you do. Maybe around special education, or ESOL, or pragmatically. Think about that. And be prepared to share those things with the elementary school, so that you're working in partnership.

So, those are five really easy things, I think, that you can do today to really start to ramp up your relationship with the public schools. Give it a try. See how it goes. Give us some feedback. We want to know. And I'll try to keep these ideas coming to you and sharing with you things that other people are doing.

And so, to close today, I'm going to share with you something that if you don't already know about it, you really should. Here are two things, as I find these, I'm going to share it with you.

One is called Family Promise. This is a nonprofit I learned about that services homeless families through faith-based locations. So mostly churches, temples, places like that. Ad they partnership to makes sure that homeless families have a safe place to be. They're located with affiliates around the country. And I'm going to provide you with the URL, and I encourage you to see if you've got a Family Promise in your community. And if you do, connect with them, let them know that you are there. And who knows?

Maybe you've got empty seats you need to fill, and they might have children who aren't receiving services. It's a great way to bring eligible children together with Head Start, and just to be a resource for another community program. So I encourage you to look them up.

And then number two, is something called Sanford Harmony. I learned about this character-building program about a month ago. And I was really intrigued with -- It sounds like it game that you play in the classroom. Super easy to implement. If I were a teacher, I would use it. And it just gets the kids talking to each other. And that's what I thought was so intriguing about it. And also it's free. And that doesn't hurt. Right? It's a free program. Look it up. I'm going to give you the URL. They even will pay you to use it if you use it with fidelity and provide them with some research. So, if you're looking for something like that, maybe it will be a really good fit for you. It's probably not going to replace curriculum you're using now. But it could be a good supplement.

If I find any other free nuggets, I'll make sure to share them with you. I think you need to know about them.

So that's my August Vlog. My very first vlog. I look forward to September. And remember, Head Start is the access to the American dream.

Go make dreams happen.

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